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Mirrors, Wolves and Tornadoes-Oh My!

An Intertextual Exploration of Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Humanities
College of Arts and Sciences
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Dedication

To my loving and imaginative parents, who read to me every night about amazing adventures and unlimited possibilities. To my real life knight in shining armor, who endured my frequent disappearances into the world of the labyrinth both valiantly and patiently. To my own little pixie, my daughter Peyton, the spark that ignited the fire to rediscover the lost texts of my childhood and for always reminding me of the fantastical opportunities each day brings. Finally, to all of those who believe in fairies and in worlds others cannot see—never stop believing.

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Mirrors, Wolves and Tornadoes-Oh My!:

An Intertextual Exploration of Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*

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ABSTRACT

I argue that Guillermo Del Toro is a modern day storyteller, writing his film script as Ovid, The Grimms, or even Baum would pen their tales. I expand the idea of intertextuality to include not only conversations, thoughts, architecture, emotions, bodily activity, sounds, and innumerable other signifiers, but also analyzing the film "inter-imagically." By considering the film in this way it encourages a world conversation that can influence socio-political transformations in our world.

I use the stories and images in myth, fairy tale and children's literature to support the importance of agency, agency in regard to finding your own voice, determining your own path and taking action by making choices that can ultimately result in transformations that are not only personal, but political ramifications in the world.

In Echo and Narcissus, I explore issues surrounding the self-realization and loss of agency through Ofelia's refusal to follow someone else's path, allowing others to silence her voice or her potential. Using Little Red Riding Hood, I assert that Ofelia is the modern Little Red, refusing to take the path of her mother, defining her own way. Using *The Wizard of Oz*, I highlight the labyrinth of choice and the determination to return, restore or transform Ofelia's world.

I further proclaim Del Toro is a master storyteller along the lines of Ovid, Grimm and Baum and that through his film, he inspires adults to get back in touch with the childhood disobedience and questioning in order to spark a world conversation that just may transform the world around us.

Introduction

Whether told through the inflections of a teller's voice, words that dance off the pages of a book, or pictures that dramatize action on the screen in a movie theatre, stories are important to our understanding of the world around us and in negotiating our roles within it. Stories hold significant cultural, political, and economic significance and can be "authentic responses" to and for social change. When a new crisis appears, a new story or retelling will occur. This retelling can spring out of an emotional response to structural conditions and create not only awareness but even motivate a listener (or viewer) to change such conditions. Often, in the aftermath of conflict, tellers have attempted to assimilate history in order to aid the healing process of a particular community or social group in an attempt to encourage a redefinition of their identity.

Guillermo Del Toro assumes the position of the teller in the creation of his film *Pan's Labyrinth.* Del Toro is so completely committed to the story he has created that he insisted on writing the

subtitles for the film himself, ensuring the words will not lose their meaning in translation to those who are not native speakers of Spanish. The intertextuality apparent in this film lends itself to multiple interpretations. Diane Caney addresses the multi-dimensional aspect of intertextuality in her article "Inside/Outside Intertextuality" (Caney 2). Text becomes not only that which we would consider "formal" or "canonical," but also encompasses conversations, thoughts, architecture, emotions, bodily activity, sounds, and innumerable other signifiers (Caney 2). While intertextuality provides a lens for viewing *Pan's Labyrinth* through myth, fairy tale and children's literature, I expand upon intertextuality to analyze the film "inter-imagically." "Inter-imagicality" allows us to expand our readings of the film to encompass the world that produced it, a world that can be affected, even transformed, by the thoughtful viewing, analysis and interpretation of art. The transformative power of the world conversation is the goal. In other words, by employing inter-imagicality, the reader teaches herself the lessons and forms her own narrative, just as Ofelia gives birth to herself through the course of the film.

As Graham Allen writes in his book *Intertextuality*: "Our task is to engage with [intertextuality] as a split, multiple concept, which

poses questions and requires one to engage with them rather than forcing one to produce definite answers" (Allen qtd. in Haberer). *Pan's Labyrinth* shows that there are no definite answers, that authorial intent exists alongside reader interpretation. In alluding to stories we may already be familiar with via words or images, Del Toro invites us to find his intent or create our own. There is no one *right* way to interpret his film.

However, in acknowledgment of the fact that knowing the author can lend to the understanding of intent or deepen an understanding of his work by a viewer or reader, we will delve into Del Toro's history. Guillermo Del Toro was born in 1964, in Guadalajara Jalisco, Mexico. He was raised by his Catholic grandmother and developed his interest in film as a teenager. Del Toro created his first short feature, *Dona Herlinda and Her Son,* at the age of 21. He spent ten years as a makeup supervisor and formed his own special effects company, Necropia, in the early 1980s, while also producing and directing and teaching film in Mexico. Del Toro's first movie break came in 1993 with *Cronos,* a story of an aged antique storeowner who discovers a small machine that grants him immortality, though it also turns him into a vampire. Del Toro took home nine Mexican Academy Awards including best picture and director as well as the highest prize at Cannes in

1993. *Mimic* was the next film to follow, a film he remains unhappy with to this day. Del Toro's father was kidnapped and held ransom for seventy-two days during its shooting, and Del Toro often comments that when he looks at *Mimic* now, he sees a flawed creature that could have been beautiful. The turmoil of his father's kidnapping and the pressures of the restrictive studio environment during *Mimic's* filming resulted in his forming his own production company, The Tequila Gang, with Bertha Navarro.

Armed with the freedom to create in an unrestricted environment, Del Toro began work on *The Devil's Backbone*, his 2001 ghost story centering on an orphanage during the final days of the Spanish Civil War. In an interview with Emmanuel Levy, Del Toro reveals:

> Mexico was a very brave country at the time of the Civil War; we opened ourselves to any and all Republican immigrants that would come to us. These expatriates heavily shaped Mexican culture and cinema, some of them became key mentors of mine growing up. They had tales of leaving Spain behind as children. These tales affected me a lot. (Levy 1)

Del Toro also indulged in the underground "anarchic" comic books published in Spain in the 1980s. One such comic, *Paracuellos*[1] would influence *The Devil's Backbone* and eventually lead to what is now considered its companion piece*, Pan's Labyrinth*. Del Toro states:

> Like any other artist, you are not limited geographically to the influences that are indigenous to your home city or country, and also, Mexico had an incredibly intense and deep relationship with Spain during the Civil War, we basically stood up for Spain, so you know, I've always felt that war very closely. (Savlov 3)

Del Toro continues to discuss the fact that both *The Devil's Backbon*e and *Pan's Labyrinth* are anti-fascist statements. He advises that "*Pan's Labyrinth* tries to be a parable, and I believe that the parable works across time—it is as pertinent today as it would be in 1944 Spain" (Savlov 3). Del Toro explains that he "doesn't put the blame on the institutions; but on the people who do not resist them; the people who do not choose to be disobedient" (Savlov 3). He further asserts that the problem with the world today is that blind obedience is esteemed as a virtue, and truly, it should be considered a defect (Savlov 3). In an interview with Davie Stratton of *At the Movies*, Del Toro stated that

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[1] By Carlos Gimenez*,* 1981.

"adults need fairytales more than ever right now. I say the dream of the imagination produces creatures and the dream of the politician produces wars" (1).

Del Toro's stories often center on characters who are orphaned and left to their own devices to prevail against unfair odds. Del Toro was "aching to do a tale that was rooted in a visual world that [he] could codify and then run amok" with (Levy 2). *Pan's Labyrinth* parallels two worlds: 1944 fascist Spain and the world of the Labyrinth as it exists for his female protagonist, Ofelia. Why this particular time and setting? There is now a movement: a conscious choice to remember, memorialize, and open discussion regarding this event.[2] In *Why Fairy Tales Stick,* Jack Zipes eloquently states: "As we know, tales do not only speak to us, they inhabit us and become relevant in our struggles to resolve conflicts that endanger our happiness" (39). Del Toro's story may seem, on the surface, more relevant to a Spanish struggle, but I feel *Pan's Labyrinth* addresses the very real social, economic, and political conflicts in every country's past, present, and future, all relevant, inherent, and poignant to war in general. This film illustrates the dichotomy of the human experience: the ideas of good

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[2] For an informative piece regarding this movement see Madeleine Davis' article, "Is Spain Recovering its Memory? Breaking the Pacto del Olvido." *Human Rights Quarterly* 27 no. 3, (August 2005), pp. 858-880.

and evil and the gray areas in between where we are all forced to make choices here on earth, in our own labyrinths. In keeping with the power of the reader/viewer and respecting authorial intent, I explore three specific "inter-imagical" themes in *Pan's Labyrinth.* These themes are explored by considering Ofelia's agency in relation to voice and the myth of Echo and Narcissus; Ofelia's path in comparison to the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood; and the power of choice and putting choice into transformative action by analyzing similarities in children's literature, namely, *The Wizard of Oz*. In doing so, I hope to illustrate that Del Toro is encouraging the reader/viewer to construct meanings and relevance. In allowing the reader to make these types of connections, Del Toro encourages conversations that just may be the transformative jolt that could change the world for the better.

Chapter One

The Echo of Ofelia

Reflections in mirrors and reflections in pools; voices silenced and found; echoes that lead to paths and actions—the myths of Echo and Narcissus allow us to recognize the importance of self-awareness and agency in *Pan's Labyrinth*. In this chapter, I will use these myths as a lens to expose characters' psychologies in *Pan's Labyrinth*. Through this comparison, I expose the transformative power of self-realization, voice and the agency it can afford, not only in the film, but ultimately as it can be applied to the world at large.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell[3] speaks of underground journeys that are the trademark of heroes. To step into a cave is to dare to look at the dark parts of one's mind and soul. The darkness hides what could be lurking in the cave, or even within one's self. The biggest

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[3] Joseph Campbell, the most famous mythologist of the twentieth century, seriously pursued the meaning and power of mythology in shaping the cultural folkways and mores of the world. He was particularly interested in the hero and hero cycle, but others such as Otto Rank and Carl Jung, both students of Freud, were the inspiration and forerunners of Campbell's famous work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.*

monster one may face on their journey may be coming to terms with their own doubts and fears. Joseph Campbell embraced the idea that myths are metaphors for actions and events that occur within each person's inner journey of self and can help individuals become more aware of their own potential and purposes. To Campbell, myth has the ability, through metaphor, to reveal a deeper truth about the world in which we live.

Jack Zipes considers our penchant for being enthralled with images in his article "Pan's Labyrinth" published in the *Journal of American Folklore*. Zipes discusses the significance he believes Del Toro places on looking, perceiving, recognizing, and realizing (PL 238). Zipes believes Del Toro's images are "intended to evoke startling associations that make us question our realities" (PL 240). We all have the capacity to be "deluded by spectacle"[4] in our daily lives in a way that distracts us from the brutality in our world (Zipes PL 240). Zipes serves up Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* as a modern version of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Debord utilizes the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer addressing how the dominant mode of capitalist production uses

[4] Spectacle as used here by Debord in his *Society of the Spectacle* is "not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (p.12).

technology to alienate humans from each other and demonstrates that the spectacle created by the dominant forces reinforces complacency, passivity, justification of hierarchical rule, a monopoly on the realm of appearances and acceptance of the status quo (Zipes PL 240).

Del Toro opposes the spectacle created by the hegemony in order to confound those whom it seeks to control. Del Toro shows war for what it really is in order for us to understand the risks involved to stand against it. Through Echo and Narcissus, we learn that images can be deceiving and one's own voice can be lost in the din of the hegemony. Ofelia is able to move past Echo and Narcissus' fate and claim her own agency. Since the first teller of stories, the listener, reader or viewer has become a witness, vicariously exploring choices and consequences through various characters' experiences. Francis Lee Utley, in his introductions to Max Luthi's *Once Upon a Time*, states, "Man, indeed, stands at the center of the fairy tale, just as gods and saints inhabited the two kinds of legend and the animal the primitive tale. Fantastic and wondrous as fairy tales seem, they are closer to humanity than we think or perhaps care to admit" (Luthi 18).

Ovid's tale of Echo and Narcissus speaks of two individuals, each cursed by and through their own actions. Echo, who is blessed with a cunning intelligence and gift for speech, engages Hera in conversation,

enabling her sister nymphs, who lay themselves bare to Zeus's whims, to escape Hera's eye and rage. Finally implicated as an accessory, Echo is stripped of her voice by Hera and only able to echo the last words spoken to her. Echo eventually becomes enamored of Narcissus, but is unable to convey her feelings to him: "How she longed to make her passion known! To plead in soft entreaty! To implore his love! But now, till others have begun, a mute of Nature she must be. She cannot choose but wait the moment when his voice may give to her an answer" (Ovid). Echo falls in love with Narcissus, who rejects her and causes her to hide in lonely caves and hills. There she wastes away until she is not seen but only heard. Echo is essentially stripped of her voice, of her agency. She becomes a shadow of her former self.

Narcissus is gorgeous, possessing fingers Bacchus would desire, hair as glorious as Apollo's and a complexion as fair and blushing as the rose in snowdrift white. He has deceived, slighted, and denied several lovers and ends up cursed by an amorous youth who implores the gods to deny him what he loves. Nemesis hears the plea and soon Narcissus finds his way to a beautiful fountain, which no one had ever touched before. Thirsty from the hunt, he bends down only to behold his own image in the water of the untouched spring and is immediately possessed by the image. He is unable to tear himself away and

eventually succumbs to death. Narcissus becomes a shadow of his former self.

I argue that the myths of Echo and Narcissus can be used to explore issues of agency and self-reflection in *Pan's Labyrinth*. Del Toro shows us the difficult work involved in self-reflection through the exploration of his characters. Loren E. Pedersen discusses the Jungian concept of the "shadow" self in her book *Dark Hearts: The Unconscious Forces That Shape Men's Lives*. The shadow is made up of those parts of ourselves which we have come to believe are not acceptable to others. In order to disassociate ourselves from these thoughts, we "split" from them. Splitting occurs in the early stages of childhood as our egos are being formed. As children, we first split away from our mothers and then move on to discriminate by sorting through what we consider to be "I" and "not I." This defensive mechanism splits off the "undesirable parts and relegates them to the unconscious, as shadow" (Pedersen 166). The goal is to be able to see these shadows and to achieve a high level of self-reflective consciousness. Vidal has melded with his father's "I" and Ofelia has recognized that her mother is "not I."

The two main characters in Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* are Captain Vidal and his recently acquired stepdaughter, Ofelia.

Ofelia's father, a tailor, has been killed during the Spanish Civil War. Ofelia's mother, Carmen, has taken up with Captain Vidal since her husband's death and becomes pregnant; Captain Vidal decides that Carmen and Ofelia must join him at his military outpost situated in an old mill. Captain Vidal is positive that the child Carmen is carrying is a son. Entertaining the idea that his child would be anything other than a son would acknowledge the idea that Vidal didn't have control over the natural process of creation. The power of patriarchy, of man, must be upheld and continued.

In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Captain Vidal may not be cursed by a scorned lover, but he is indeed cursed by his father's legacy. Vidal's narcissism stems from Vidal's mirroring of his father, identifying with his father's image which now forms his ego. In essence, Vidal assumes his father's voice and in doing so, loses his own. In his effort to "seize" time, he fixes the watch that marks his father's death in the hopes that his son will one day have it as a marker of the exact hour of his own death. Captain Vidal is ruled by the timepiece, its manufactured tick removing him from the natural rhythms of the Earth with each tock. Nature is too unpredictable for Vidal, who must control the natural world to restore order to the unruly chaos of the rebels.

Captain Vidal wants his son to know that his father was integral in the eugenic purging of Spain. Vidal states:

> I choose to be here because I want my son to be born in a new, clean Spain. Because these people hold the mistaken belief that we're all equal. But there's a big difference: the war is over and we won. And if we need to kill every one of these vermin to settle it, then we will kill them all, and that's that. (*Pan's Labyrinth*)

Narcissus is deceived by his own image, while Vidal is deceived by the image of his father, by this ideal standard he must live up to. Vidal has suppressed negative feelings about his own inability to live up to his father, which end up being expressed through projection. Vidal projects this unconscious and emotionally charged negativity unto others, namely the rebels, whom he rejects as being inferior to him (Pedersen 167). Del Toro allows us to catch the Captain gazing at his own reflection several times during the film. One such scene occurs while Vidal is shaving. The camera zooms in as we voyeuristically catch the suggestive gesture of slitting his own throat, indicative of his own self-loathing. This scene is reminiscent of Ovid's Narcissus:

> While he is drinking he beholds himself reflected in the mirrored pool—and loves; loves an imagined body which contains no

substance, for he deems the mirrored shade a thing of life to love. (Ovid)

This mirrored shade/stage[5] for Vidal is the authentic self that Vidal is denying in order to pursue the filling of his father's shoes. If Vidal can control his environment, time, peasants, running of his household, wife, the sex of his child, and his unruly daughter-in-law, then perhaps he has a chance of ensuring his legacy.

This is why Vidal has such a strong reaction toward the rebels; they are what he cannot be, a rebel. He is unable to rebel against his father's legacy, his father's will. When a carrier of some "split off shadow quality" appears, it evokes strong and irrational behavior (Pedersen 167). For Vidal, this shadow quality is the ability to be disobedient, to not take orders or legacies from others. Vidal is unable to follow his natural instinct to disobey, or be rebellious. Pedersen

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[5] This refers to Jacques Lacan's idea of the mirror stage, in which the ideal "I" becomes synonymous with image of a beloved parent. This "I" formed in the mirror stage always functions as an Other and is the basis for which all Others are defined and take shape in relation to this formation. Narcissism is healthy in children, but to those who do not outgrow it, their libido ends up directed exclusively toward representations of themselves. There is a constant negotiation between what is inside and outside, sometimes resulting in an "assumption of the armor of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development." "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" trans. by Alan Sheridan from *Ecrits: A Selection* originally delivered as a lecture on July 17, 1949 to the 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis.

explains that often projections are accompanied by strong negative feelings such as disgust, anger or fear, reflecting a visceral reaction to the abhorrent qualities we attempt to deny in ourselves. The shadow can manifest itself in an individual, especially when that individual personifies and embodies the collective evil. These individuals believe they are facilitators of much needed reforms that benefit their group and humankind while also harboring a powerful obsession to exclude by whatever means possible the elements that are antithetical to their views. War is one of the best examples of this mutual projection or collective shadow at work. Men, such as Vidal, become split from the feminine and nature, often resulting in a “wounded” narcissism that attempts to heal itself through “justified” vengeance (Pedersen 167-168).

There are several horrors perpetrated by Vidal in the course of the film. Del Toro does not shy away from showing the brutality of the world. Del Toro is not seeking to reduce the horror of history, but to reinforce it (Smith 6). Del Toro discusses his reasoning for including this violence in an interview with Mark Kermode:

> The settings of Andersen, the Brothers Grimm and Oscar Wilde were incredibly brutal: Hansel and Gretel were two children abandoned in the woods in the middle of a famine to die of

> hunger and cold. But you need to know the brutality for the reality of the magic to happen. That's why the war made such a perfect backdrop. (4)

One of the most disturbing horrors of this film is the torture of the captured stuttering rebel. It is almost as if, because Vidal has given up his own agency in pursuit of his father's legacy, he must continually take this agency from others. Elaine Scarry addresses this in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*:

> At particular moments when there is within a society a crisis of belief—that is, when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief either because it is manifestly fictitious, or because it has for some reason been divested of ordinary forms of substantiation—the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the "aura" of realness and certainty. (Scarry 36)

Del Toro's visuals seek to expose Vidal's pursuit of power by denying the agency of the rebel by torturing his body and mocking his voice, by mocking his inability to count to three without stuttering. Vidal's power is what he considers real and he will force the rebels to concede that they have no power; their rebellious acts are not allowed potential

in Vidal's reality. Vidal has to go beyond slitting his own throat in the mirror to torturing the rebel that is now the object of his shadow projection. The torturer's questions are meant to "announce the feigned urgency and critical importance of his world, a world whose asserted magnitude is confirmed by the cruelty it is able to motivate and justify" (Scarry 36). This act strips the tortured of his own authentic voice, controlling it to the point of reducing it to screams, providing proof that Vidal or the Francoist regime has effectively stripped him of control over his own voice, his own agency. "The absence of pain is a presence of the world: the presence of pain is the absence of the world. The larger the prisoner's pain, the larger the torturer's world" (Scarry 37). This again is the assertion of Vidal's will over the will of the rebel. The rebel is unable to control his stuttering, is tortured within an inch of his life, and the doctor is called in to assist Vidal in maintaining his presence long enough to continue the torture. The doctor cannot continue to be complacent and effectively euthanizes the stuttering rebel. So, for all of Vidal's attempts to usurp voice and agency, he is again defeated by the doctor's refusal to comply. Vidal's power is nothing but illusory in the end.

CAPTAIN VIDAL: Why did you do it?

DOCTOR: It was the only thing I could do.

CAPTAIN VIDAL: No, you could have obeyed me.

> DOCTOR: I could, but I didn't. To obey, just like that, for the sake of obeying, without questioning...That's something only people like you can do, Captain. (*Pan's Labyrinth*)

The doctor has dissolved the illusion of the "realness" of Fascism's cultural construction by denying Vidal the power to control his actions. The doctor is shot, and Vidal has now placed the delivery of his son in peril.

Paul Julian Smith comments in his critique of *Pan's Labyrinth* in *Film Quarterly*: "This fantasy of pure male filiation, without the intercession of women, is fundamental to Fascism. Vidal's fetishistic attention to uniform and his amorous investment in the tools of torture suggest a fatal narcissism which is as much libidinal as it is political" (6). Through Captain Vidal, Smith asserts, "Guillermo Del Toro is able to critique the equally obsessive hygiene of the real life realm of Fascism" (8). Elaine Scarry addresses the idea that if pain is not expressed, there exists a possibility that bodies will continue to be used to conflate "debased forms of power" (14). This follows the same premise that in order to have the power, you must take all forms of power away from those that oppose you. If they can't speak, they can't oppose you. By giving us the gruesome details, Del Toro is finding a way to restore the tortured voice, to amplify the expression

of pain in order to expose the usurper and make this conflation less likely. Del Toro has the doctor recognize the illusion of Vidal's power and stand against it. We will also see Ofelia possesses this power to see through the illusion, "the spectacle" as Debord and Zipes define it. Ofelia will find her voice, the voice that was taken from Echo and the stuttering rebel. Ofelia will not accept the image she sees as Narcissus did; she gives birth to herself as a beautiful and wise Princess with agency and a voice that will continue to be heard long after she returns to her kingdom.

Del Toro masters the power of telling, the discursiveness that exists between what is seen and unseen, what is said and unsaid by paralleling Captain Vidal's world against Ofelia's fantasy. In the beginning of the film, we see Ofelia's blood run back into her body and we are told the story:

> A long time ago, in the Underground Realm where there are no lies or pain, there lived a princess who dreamt of the human world. She dreamt of blue skies, soft breezes, and sunshine. One day, eluding her helpers, the princess escaped. Once outside, the bright sun blinded her and erased her memory. She forgot who she was, and where she came from. Her body suffered cold, sickness, and pain, and eventually she died. However, her

> father, the King, always knew that the Princess's soul would return, perhaps in another place, at another time. And he would wait for her, until he drew his last breath, until the world stopped turning. (*Pan's Labyrinth*)

It is significant that we see the final scene of the film first, that it is reversed and we are told Princess Moanna/Ofelia's story; for while it may be the end to her life on earth, it is actually a beginning, a return to her other life. In the following scene, Ofelia is riding in a Bentley and reading her fairy stories. As her mother is pregnant and made ill by the car ride, she steps outside to rest. Ofelia too goes outside and there she finds a glorious dragonfly. The dragonfly leads her to a statue with a missing eye. She restores the missing piece of the statue's eye; this small act transforms both Ofelia's and our ways of seeing.

From this point forward we are aware that Ofelia will see things differently, and it is through her ability to see a different reality that she will become a nemesis to Vidal. Vidal has given up his agency by pursuing a legacy and Ofelia is gaining hers by opposing Vidal's wishes. Like Echo, it seems that Ofelia's expected place in a Francoist world is to "echo" the voice of the Captain or patriarch. Patriarchy does indeed receive a response from Ofelia, but she, unlike Echo, will not

"lie rejected in the deep woods, concealed in lonely caverns until her miserable body wastes away" (Ovid). Soon after her arrival at the mill and her subsequent discovery of the labyrinth, she is warned not to "get lost" in the labyrinth by Mercedes, the Captain's assistant and head of the household help. Mercedes confesses that she used to believe in fairy tales; certainly the difficulty her brother faces as he leads the rebels in the woods, and witnessing the evil of Vidal may have tarnished her hope, her belief in fairy tale happy endings. Ofelia reaches out to Mercedes when she recognizes that Mercedes has aligned herself with the rebel forces in the woods, which reinforces her self-identification as a rebel.

In *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys discusses the idea of an individual identifying with an aggressor not as a defense, but because of an unconscious imitation or mimesis that connotes an abyssal openness to all identification (32). This would explain why a traumatic event cannot be remembered, but is "relived" in the form of recounting a past that identifies with another in the present, being characterized by a profound amnesia or absence of self (Leys 32). The other that Ofelia identifies with is the empowered princess from her fantasies. Perhaps Ofelia's fantasy is a means of "binding" her realities in a way that allows her to deal with the horrors in Captain Vidal's

world on her own terms. Instead of “binding” herself to a Francoist identity, she has bound herself up or chosen to identify with the princess. As a princess, she gains back her agency and navigates her way through the horrors of her everyday existence by considering each set of horrors as a challenge that will ultimately allow her to return to her parents, or return to herself.

Ofelia cannot show her brother how not to become Vidal, but she can tell him. Ofelia does not sing her brother a lullaby, but she does offer up a story:

> Many, many years ago, in a sad faraway land, there was an enormous mountain made of rough black stone. At sunset, on top of that mountain a magic rose blossomed every night that made whoever plucked it immortal. But no one dared go near it because its thorns were full of poison. Men talked amongst themselves about their fear of death, and pain, but never about the promise of eternal life. And everyday, the rose wilted, unable to bequeath its gift to anyone. Forgotten and lost at the top of that cold dark mountain, forever alone, until the end of time. (*Pan’s Labyrinth*)

This story, while appearing overtly religious in nature, can also be one of recognizing potential. The rose offers the potential of your efforts

being remembered, of having purpose and meaning long after your struggle on earth has ceased. Like the story, people talk about pain and fear but never of the ability to do something about it, to take an active role in their own lives. When individuals cease to recognize their own potential, the hope that that potential will one day be fulfilled wilts away like the rose, cold and unrealized. Ofelia will not allow her potential to go unrealized. She will find a way to make it to the rose, to make the most of her potential. Ofelia will fight until her last breath; she is cunning and driven enough to find a way to escape from a locked room with only a piece a chalk. No, Ofelia will, unike Echo, find a way to be heard and seen.

In the final scene, Mercedes holds Vidal and Carmen's son, Ophelia's little brother.

> CAPTAIN VIDAL: Tell my son, tell him what time his father died. Tell him that I...
>
> MERCEDES: No. He won't even know your name.

Vidal will not pass on his dysfunction, his son will not be haunted by his image, and he will not even know his father's name. The cycle of the shadow collective is coming to an end. Ofelia is able to leave a legacy and find her voice through her rejection of things as they are;

Vidal is denied his legacy and voice by being stagnant and unable to recognize his own potential or his own ability to change his course by reclaiming his own agency, instead of denying others theirs.

Fellow filmmaker Alfonso Cuaron comments on Guillermo Del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*:

> These films are about moral choices. And they have to do with the universe of children, and how ideology becomes the first big trap and prison for humanity. What is amazing is how Guillermo juggles it all. He doesn't lose a beat of the suspense of the fantasy world that he's presenting. And he doesn't lose a beat in the political discourse that he's delivering. And within all that, there is the humanism of the piece. (Levy 5)

Princess Moanna represents the forgotten pieces of the Civil War, the memory that was, at one time, denied a voice. She represents what remains unsaid, unremembered even today after Franco's regime has long since fallen. She encourages us to explore what lies beneath and beyond the spectacle. We must shatter the image that confounds Narcissus and restore Echo's voice. Princess Moanna urges us reclaim our agency, our ability to make choices based on our authentic selves, and not simply mirror the hegemony.

Chapter Two

The Grimm Reality

Little girls, this seems to say,
Never stop upon your way,
Never trust a stranger-friend;
No one knows how it will end.
As you're pretty so be wise;
Wolves may lurk in every guise.
Handsome they may be, and kind,
Gay, or charming-nevermind!
Now, as then, 'tis simple truth-
Sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth!

-Charles Perrault

Charles Perrault's tale *Le petit chaperon rouge*, or *Little Red Riding Hood* is a morality tale that cautions a little girl to be obedient. Catherine Orenstein asserts, in her book *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, that Perrault's version was written for Louis XIV and his court at Versailles, where apartments separating wives from husbands

facilitated sexual indiscretions. Orenstein gives examples of court intrigue by informing us that Princess de Soubise's wearing of emerald earrings in her husband's absence served as an invitation for a royal rendezvous (24). Orenstein quotes Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, The Marquise de Sevigne, who writes to her daughter every day about court intrigue. In a letter written April 6, 1671, the Marquise recounts her son's conquests and his untimely bouts of impotence while at Versailles: "A favorable occasion had presented itself, and yet, dare I say it? I told him I was delighted that he had been punished for his sins at the precise point of origin!"(Orenstein 25).

The rituals of courtiers were more amusing than scandalous, but for certain players at Versailles, amorous actions could be not only dangerous, but also fatal (Orenstein 25). This idea permeates Perrault's version of Little Red as well as an image included in the initial publication. Perrault provided a watercolor vignette with his manuscript in 1695 showing the wolf, sans disguise, lying on top of a girl, paws on either side. The girl, Little Red, reclines against a pillow with her hands reaching out to his snout. The vignette captures a moment prior to Red's untimely death, a moment prior to the wolf baring his sharp fangs and consuming her. There is no doubt that this

tale warns of the precarious path Red has elected to travel, one to maturity, promiscuity, rape and death.

Little Red dwells within Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, but not in Perrault's highly sexualized context. Counter to Janet Thormann in her article "Other Pasts: Family Romances of Pan's Labyrinth," I do not support the idea that Ophelia is acting out of Freud's ideas expressed in his "Family Romances." [6] The idea Ophelia is feeling a loss of love from her parents and is engaged in a sibling rivalry, which will cause her to "indulge in a compensatory fantasy of an alternative genealogy that serves a wounded narcissism," is unproductive. Thormann's attempt to argue this fantasy "becomes the film's vision of a redemptive history…as a transmission of the unfulfilled potential of the past to the generation of the future" does not serve the transformative message of Del Toro's film (Thormann 175).[7] Instead, I argue that Del

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[6] "The child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who as a rule, are of higher social standing" (Freud 238-239 qtd. in Thormann).

[7] Essentially, Thormann argues that Del Toro employs a common childhood fantasy, described by Freud in his "Family Romances" as a matrix for the narrative of a young girl's development into an ethical subject of social community. She further argues that the surrealness of the film represents the shame Ofelia comes to recognize in relation to history. Thormann attempts to show that the image of the resistance against Spanish Fascism is itself a "collective family romance that proposes a genealogy for a potential future in Spain." Thormann

Toro's Ofelia is a re-visioned version of Little Red Riding Hood. In this chapter, I will discuss the various retellings of Little Red and connect Ofelia's agency to her new path that links her disobedience to a higher transformative purpose that functions both personally and politically. Ofelia gives birth to herself, leaving nothing to genealogy. Guillermo Del Toro states very clearly in an interview with Mark Kermode for *Sight and Sound* that "the psychosexual interpretation [of the film] is, of course, much more modern, but I find it very reductive" (Kermode 4). I argue that Ofelia represents the empowered, progressive heroine who through her disobedience is capable of subverting, through retellings, the regressive mythologies of femininity (Hubner 6). And so, like Little Red herself, we will take a different route.

The Brothers Grimm 1812 version, *Little Red Cap*, transforms Perrault's version from a warning to be modest and chaste to listening to your mother and remaining on the path she sets for you. Michael

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contradicts herself within the first few pages by stating "Ofelia does not embody the features of Freud's child in "Family Romances"" (Thormann 238). She asserts that Ofelia is the rival of her unborn brother, that she craves her mother's love and admires her beauty. This results in Ophelia laying blame on her mother for her castration and implies that if her father hadn't been killed, Ofelia would desire the phallus in the form of a baby, and compete with her mother for her father's love. Since Ophelia's father is dead, this does not apply to her relationship with Vidal and allows a "hole" for her to create this family fantasy, a paternity that she can idealize (Thormann 178).

Atkinson got it right in his article for *Film Comment,* "Moral Horrors in Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, The Supernatural Realm Mirrors Man's Inhumanity to Man," when he writes that Del Toro's "sensibility is Grimmian" (50). Eliminating the cruelty and sexuality from the tale, the Grimms begin their story with a mother instructing her daughter on the appropriate path to take to Grandmother's house, shifting the emphasis of Little Red from sex to the perils of disobedience. It is with this in mind that here enters our disobedient Ofelia, the Little Red of *Pan's Labyrinth*.

The movie opens with Carmen (Ofelia's mother) traveling via military motorcade to the mill. We see these vehicles, lined up perfectly one behind the other, sticking to the path through the woods to the mill. Carmen is close to term in her pregnancy and has become ill from the car ride. She becomes nauseous, asks for the driver to stop and vomits on the path. This comes moments after she scolds Ofelia for reading fairy stories, advising her that they "will curdle her brain," and that "life is not a fairy story" (*Pan's Labyrinth*). Carmen believes that the "path" she is on, marrying Captain Vidal, is the socially correct path that will afford her children a better place in the world. Carmen presents Ofelia with a brand new dress and shoes, a supposed gift from Vidal, for her to wear to dinner that night. Carmen is advising

Ofelia to stay on her path, accept Vidal as her new father and accept her place in Franco society. Carmen exemplifies the quiet, submissive nationalist mother, who will surely have her son swept from her arms and into battle as soon as Captain Vidal deems it should be so. A manifesto of the Catholic Ladies of Sevilla entitled “Spanish Women” contained the following advice, informing the path women of this time, like Carmen’s character, should take:

> In these grave moments for the country, your way of life cannot be that of frivolity, but austerity; your place not in the theaters, the paseos, the cafes, but in the church and hearth. Your ornaments cannot be inspired by the dirty fashions of treacherous and jewish France, but the modesty and pudeur [sense of modesty] of Christian morality….Your duty is not to procure for yourself an easy life, but to educate your children, sacrificing your pleasures and helping Spain. (Thomas 763)

This quote exemplifies the path that Carmen has placed herself on, the path she wishes Ofelia to emulate.

Lisa Vollendorf, in her book *Recovering Spain’s Feminist Tradition*, discusses Francoist policy and social attitudes toward women in the post Spanish Civil War era. Vollendorf highlights the influential Seccion Femenina of the Falange, The Spanish Fascist party, who

assumed responsibility for preparing young women for their place in the New Spain. Indoctrination of this responsibility began early with textbooks glorifying religious wars, depicting Spain as a lone crusader in upholding Catholic ideals and pointing to the family and women as "illustrations of the nation's highest values" (234). During this regime, women were taught that marriage, not independence, was the highest ideal to which she would aspire (Vollendorf 313). Guillermo Del Toro has then aptly represented this oppressed mother in Carmen, bringing to the screen this constructed idea of gender, the idealism of motherhood working toward the fascist/nationalist state. Carmen is the perfect mother for Francoist Spain, for Captain Vidal, as further exemplified by her complete condemnation of Ofelia's determination not to follow her advice. In the following scene, we witness Carmen's unwillingness to come to Ophelia's defense when Captain Vidal realizes Ophelia has placed the mandrake root under her mother's bed:

> CAPTAIN VIDAL: What the hell is this? Look at this? Look at what she has been hiding under your bed! What do you think of this?
>
> CARMEN: Ofelia, what is this thing doing under the bed?
>
> OFELIA: It's a magic root the faun gave me.

CAPTAIN VIDAL: This is all because of the jumbo you let her read. Look at what you have done!

CARMEN: Please leave us alone. I'll talk to her darling.

OFELIA: He [The Faun] told me you would get better and you did.

CARMEN: Ofelia, you have to listen to your father. You have to stop all of this.

OFELIA: No, I want to leave this place! Please take me away from here! Let's just go, please!

CARMEN: Things are not that simple. You're getting older; soon you'll see that life isn't like your fairy tales. The world is a cruel place and you'll learn that even if it hurts. [Throws mandrake on fire] Magic does not exist. Not for you, not for me or anyone else.

Carmen has followed her path so thoroughly, so completely, even going so far as to marry the wolf and bear its offspring. It is never explicitly stated, but it is implied (during the dinner scene at the mill) that Captain Vidal may have had his eyes on her prior to her husband, a tailor, being killed. Carmen's determination to stick to the path has ultimately led to her complete annihilation. Carmen succumbs to the

toxic pregnancy after depriving herself of help from the magical mandrake; her coveted son is delivered and she leaves Ofelia, now free finally, to pursue her own path and not follow her in her mother's footsteps.

In the same opening scene, as Carmen becomes ill on the path to the mill, Ofelia runs into the woods, off the path, away from the motorcade. Upon arriving at the mill, she greets her father with her left hand (an immediate insult) and heads into the Labyrinth for the first time. From the get go, we know Ofelia is not on the same path as her mother. She is the Grimms' Little Red only in the sense that she refuses to take direction. The path she places herself on is one of her own choosing, not the detailed plan her mother has for her. In Del Toro's story there is no wolf disguised in granny's clothes per se, but a well-dressed, well-groomed, well-spoken politician of evil in Vidal. Del Toro comments that "one of the dangers of fascism and one of the dangers of true evil in our world, which I believe exists, is that it's very attractive" (Guillen 3). Vidal is a man who can bash a poor peasant's face in with a bottle one moment and the gentleman who gets up when a lady enters or leaves the room during dinner the next. He must be a powerful leader to his minions and the epitome of decorum to society's upper crust. Appearances are everything to Vidal.

Vidal's desire to have his daughter dressed properly and brought down to dinner is a means of controlling her and a further extension of his own image. Victoria Lorre Enders includes an excerpt from writings of the Seccion Femnina of Madrid in her book *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*:

> The Seccion Femenina has occupied itself in preserving and exacerbating the traditional sense of the Spanish woman as much as possible; the loving wife and sacrificing mother, Catholic and dissimulating, ignorant and uncultured, who in order to be included in the symbolic social order needed nothing more than the attribute of neatness, submission and silence. (Enders & Radcliff 378)

Carmen is exactly what Vidal was hunting, but he did not bargain for Ofelia, whose fairy stories do not share his same ideals. Vidal is the wolf in the sense that he wishes to consume Ofelia's agency, to reduce her into a neat, submissive, silent shell. Enders also quotes Elena Posa's essay "Una educación especialmente femenino":

> The avalanche of norms of conduct had no other object for the girl, than to put an end to her spontaneity, her initiative and creativity, in order to obtain a repressed, a submissive type of woman." (Posa qtd. in Enders 379)

I believe that Vidal has an issue with the power of the womb. From the time Carmen arrives at the mill, he assumes control of her body. He does not allow her to walk, but places her in a wheelchair. We know that he is obviously concerned about the well being of his son and, of course, makes sure the doctor is aware that if there is a choice to be made during delivery, the son comes first. He attempts to control the natural world. He forces Ofelia from her mother's bed when she has her first threat of a miscarriage, as if he can will Carmen to not have another one. Vidal is definitely threatened by the rebels and challenged by Ofelia. Vidal's violence against the rebels resembles the predatory nature of the wolf. Much like the mythic Cronos, Vidal possesses an insatiable desire to consume power, to control the agency of his wife and children.[8]

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[8] Uranus is concerned about his children rising up and usurping his power, so tells Gaia that they will have to die. Gaia decides to urge Cronos and his male siblings to castrate Uranus and keep him from harming the rest of the children. Cronos is the only one willing to take up the sickle Gaia provides and castrates his father. Ironically, Cronos also becomes obsessed with the idea that his own children will overthrow him, and so he swallows, or consumes them, to keep them at bay. Cronos' wife Gaia has kept one child hidden from him on an island, Zeus. In one version of the tale, Zeus gives Cronos an emetic and his siblings are then vomited back to life. In another, Zeus slits Cronos' stomach and the children pop out. It is not coincidental that Del Toro's first film was entitled *Cronos* and details the life of a vampire. Equally interesting in the fact that Perrault's version of Little Red includes the Woodsman cutting both Grandma and Little Red out of the Wolf's belly.

Symbolically, the woods stand as a place of intrigue or resistance. Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that the rebels make the woods their home. Little Red Cap has often been interpreted as a commentary on the French invasion of the Rhineland during the Napoleonic Wars, resistance fighters often finding a way in the forests of Germany. Zipes discusses the possible combination of anti-French, anti-Enlightenment notions that may have been recorded during the occupation by the Grimm's:

> The stark opposite of woods and path, nature and school make this apparent. The wolf exploits the unsuspecting nature of the innocent child. He plays upon her latent aversion to ordered and regulated normality and points seductively to the freedom of the colorful and musical woods. Thus, the conflict between freedom/wilderness/nature on the one hand versus school/straight/path/order on the other is set up very early in the narrative to illustrate a socio-political situation. (Zipes TT 17)

In the Grimm fairy tale, it is a male, the huntsman familiar with the woods and the nature of the wolf, who saves Little Red and her grandmother. Del Toro has a female become the tenacious adversary of Captain Vidal. Mercedes becomes the brave huntswoman who saves Vidal's son from being consumed by Vidal's legacy of pain. Mercedes

appears the epitome of a good maid, but underneath beats the heart of a rebel. She is the one who steals the key for her brother and the rebels in the wood to replenish their food supply. She is the one who convinces the doctor to help the injured rebels. A female has become Vidal's undoing, and perhaps foreshadows the end (albeit much later) of the patriarchal, fascist reign of Franco.

> CAPTAIN VIDAL: You can go, Garces.
>
> GARCES: You're sure Captain?
>
> CAPTAIN VIDAL: For God's sake, she's just a woman.
>
> MERCEDES: That's what you've always thought. That's why I was able to get away with it. I was invisible to you.
>
> CAPTAIN VIDAL: Damn. You've found my weakness: pride.
>
> [Mercedes loosens the restraints, grabs her kitchen knife folded within her apron and stabs Vidal several times]
>
> MERCEDES: I'm not some old man! Not a wounded prisoner! Motherfucker…don't you dare touch the girl! You won't be the first pig I've gutted! (*Pan's Labyrinth*)

Mercedes succeeds in giving Vidal what Del Toro refers to in an interview with Capone, the movie critic, a "half Chelsea" in reference

to the Chelsea gang's signature slash in Britain (Capone 20). It is all too appropriate that he is maimed in this way. The "half Chelsea" is usually given to those which are perceived to be traitors. Del Toro has Mercedes, perceived traitorous by Vidal, be the one who marks him as the traitor. This reversal implies that Vidal is the "true" traitor. His is the mouth that shouts the commands of death. His is the mouth whose voice has the power to silence others. His is the mouth that will utter the words "my son" and have his legacy stripped of him. Unlike the wolf, he doesn't have stones sewn into his stomach, or fall into a pot of boiling water by attempting to enter granny's house via the chimney; this wolf is shot in the eye, an eye that failed to see the possibility of change, of growth, of a different path. He won't be stalking prey any longer.

At the conclusion of Grimms' Little Red Cap, Little Red exclaims to herself, "Never again in your life will you stray by yourself in the woods when you mother has forbidden it" (Zipes T & T 126). Here is where the retelling or new telling of Del Toro comes in. To listen to your mother and not stray, is not the message he sends through Ofelia. In a conversation with Mercedes shortly after she has been removed from her mother's bed and placed in a desolate room by herself, Ofelia reveals again her decision to stray from the path:

MERCEDES: Don't worry. Your mother will get better soon, you'll see. Having a baby is complicated.

OFELIA: Then I'll never have one. (Pan's Labyrinth)

Ofelia's decision to never have a baby proves that she will follow her own instincts and abide by her own path.

In an interview with Michael Guillen of *The Evening Class*, Del Toro talks about the idea of redemptive transgression in *Pan's Labyrinth*:

> Instinct will guide you more than intellect towards what's right for you and actually more naturally right. Disobedience is one of the strongest signals of your conscience of what is right and what is wrong. When you disobey in an intelligent way, you disobey in a natural way, it turns out to be more beneficial than blind obedience. Blind obedience castrates, negates, hides and destroys what makes us human. (Guillen 3)

The strands of Little Red that we can find in *Pan's Labyrinth* wind out of the film into an inter-imagical interpretation; like Ofelia, we are meant to question the path we take. Like with Ofelia, or the "new and improved" Little Red, Del Toro challenges us with a choice. What we will do with the story in our lives, in our world today? Will we stick to

the path or commit an act of redemptive and transformative disobedience?

Chapter Three

Yellow Bricks and Labyrinths

Ruby slippers and labyrinthine roads; munchkins and fairies; scarecrows and woodswomen—both *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Wizard of Oz* are technicolor journeys in which their heroines question the meanings of agency. In this chapter, I assert that ideas and images from Oz can be found within Del Toro's film. Ofelia and Dorothy have similar journeys, similar challenges and similar transformative experiences that affect not only their own lives, but also those around them, in positive ways.

In the eighteenth century, fairytales reflected reason and morality, often in a bid to maintain order and protect the power of the upper class (Zipes FT 98). This was not to last.

Stories, fairytales and otherwise, began to reflect a shift in sociopolitical thinking. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution in England, the need to communicate the struggle against poverty and exploitation manifested itself through the voice and appeal of the

novel. Authors such as Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, and Hans Christian Andersen began to tell stories that blended the harsh reality of the real world with the hope of a childhood fairytale.[9] The American offspring of this British movement would use the novel as a radical mirror to reflect what was wrong with the general discourse on manners, mores, and norms in society.[10] The tale was no longer a "mirror, mirror on the wall reflecting the cosmetic bourgeois standards of unadulterated beauty and virtue": it was cracked, ragged, and likely to slice to the core (Zipes FT 99). A subversive power began to exude from these modern stories, not in a revolutionary "overthrow the government" sense, but as a means of questioning the status quo, of questioning arbitrary authoritarian rule. These authors were "consciously" inserting themselves into the discourse for change, often telling their stories from the perspective of an oppressed lower class and challenging the restrictions previously placed on the power of children's imaginations (Zipes FT 99). One such American offspring is L. Frank Baum.

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[9] See for example, Dickens' *David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist;* Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Alton Locke's *Water Babies*; Andersen's *The Little Match Girl, The Emperor's New Clothes* and *The Princess and the Pea.*

[10] Some popular American novels of this time include Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Mark Twain's *The Prince and The Pauper*.

L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* invites the reader to use his or her imagination as a creative transforming force, enabling the reader to accept Dorothy's journey as a real destination, full of hope and away from ordinary life. Baum states in the introduction to *The Lost Princess of Oz*:

> Imagination has given us the steam engine, the telephone, the talking-machine and the automobile; for these things had to be dreamed of before they became realities. So I believe that dreams—day dreams with your eyes wide open—are likely to lead to the betterment of the world. The imaginative child will become the imaginative man or woman apt to create, to invent and therefore foster civilization. (McGovern/Baum 293)

Both Ofelia and Dorothy harness this power of the imagination.

Del Toro and Baum were both looking to write a new kind of fairytale inspired by the "monsters" of their respective childhoods. Baum admitted to having recurrent nightmares about a scarecrow, yet fashioned the scarecrow as a guide, a friend, for Dorothy in his *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Carpenter & Shirley 18). In an interview with Capone, Del Toro addresses a similar waking nightmare he used to have while spending the night at his grandmother's: "I slept in the guest bedroom of my grandmother's house, at midnight, a faun would

come out from behind the dresser. It really was a recurring nightmare, that one" (Capone 5). The Faun ends up serving as an ambivalent guide to Ofelia, providing her with the book instructing her on exactly what to do on her first quest to retrieve the key from the toad.

Both Ofelia and Dorothy's stories contain essential features of the classic hero's journey of separation, descent, and return. They are both "carried" away into an adventure, have a guide or protective figure, are provided with talismans and helpers, and are subjected to a series of tests all culminating in a final act of choice, an assertion of their power which results in a coveted reward. It is Dorothy, the innocent child, who is able to vanquish the Wicked Witch of the West, just as it is Ofelia who is able to thwart the passing down of Captain Vidal's legacy to her baby brother. Those who are able to claim their agency through voice, path and the choice to act for change seem to hold the best transformative potential. Although *Pan's Labyrinth* is not a film for children as *The Wizard of Oz* is (both in novel and film form), the power of the child's ability to question and be disobedient is very apparent in both stories. Del Toro wants his viewers to reclaim that power, as Ofelia influences Mercedes to do at the end of the film.

The yellow brick road and the labyrinth both serve as paths to self-discovery for their female protagonists. Del Toro elaborates on the meaning of the maze for him in an interview with Sheila Roberts:

> The labyrinth is a very, very powerful sign... The main thing for me is that unlike a maze a labyrinth is actually a constant transit to an inevitable center. That's the difference. A maze is full of dead ends, and a labyrinth is actually a constant transit of finding, not getting lost. It's about finding, not losing your way. So that was very important for me.
>
> I can ascribe two concrete meanings of the labyrinth in the movie. One is the transit of the girl towards her own, inside reality, which is real. I think that Western cultures make a difference about inner and outer reality, with one having more weight than the other. I don't. I come from an absolutely crazy upbringing. And, I have found that [the inner] reality is just as important as the one that I'm looking at right now. (Roberts 3)

Del Toro goes on to discuss the second concrete meaning of the labyrinth in his terms, which "is the transit that Spain goes through, from a princess who forgot who she was to a generation that will never

know the name of the fascist, along with the Captain being dropped into his own historical labyrinth" (Roberts 3). The entrance to the labyrinth is inscribed with the Latin phrase, "In consiliis nostris, fatum nostrum est" or roughly translated "our choices determine our fate." This story is about the battle against fate and blind obedience; Del Toro is providing an existentialist take on the world, which defines us by our moral choices even when they may spell out our inevitable defeat (Scudellari 2).

Jesse Stewart applies Jungian concepts to *The Wizard of Oz* by describing the trip down the yellow brick road as a spiritual journey toward individuation, using Kansas as Dorothy's "outer world" and Oz as her "inner world." According to Stewart, Dorothy's task is to resolve the duality between the Wizard and the Witch (Stewart qtd. in Godwin 2). Dorothy and Ofelia are fighting against their ideas of the crone: the witch found in both Auntie Em and Carmen. Becoming the witch is a real threat, just as the questioning and rebellious nature of youth, the power of the imagination, would be threatening to mothers who only wish to guide their daughters onto the right path. The witch and the wizard go hand in hand. The witch is the female counterpart to the wizard, as the wizard has deemed it so. One cannot exist without the

other, and so the struggling against both defines Dorothy and Ofelia's journey.

Auntie Em and Ofelia's mother Carmen seem to have a lot in common. Both mothers want their children to realize that the world does not revolve around them and their childish concerns. Carmen is consistently reminding Ofelia that the world is not like her fairy stories and that she needs to wake up and call Captain Vidal "dad." In *The Wizard of Oz*, one of the opening scenes has Dorothy screaming for Auntie Em and Uncle Henry because Mrs. Gulch is threatening her dog. Auntie Em replies with a "Dorothy, please! We are trying to count!" They are gathering eggs and Dorothy is going to distract them and make them lose count. Auntie Em would prefer that Dorothy began to pay more attention to the maturation that should be taking place in Dorothy's body, of Dorothy's eggs signaling her entrance to adulthood and responsibilities Dorothy should be assuming. This opinion is also shared by Carmen when she informs Ofelia that life is not a fairy tale and reading will only distract her from the real task at hand, being an obedient daughter and woman for Spain.

Auntie Em and Carmen never grasp the possibility of Oz or the labyrinth; their daughters have removed themselves to a far, far away place, into the unimaginable, transported by their own ambitions which

carry them far from their mothers' values (Friedman 10). The journey belongs to Ofelia and Dorothy alone: their mothers cannot help them now.

Adolescence and its path to maturity is not an easy row to hoe or pit of mire to dig one's self out of. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is wearing a pinafore, just as Ofelia does in her first challenge with the toad. They both "dirty" their dresses in mud due to their self-absorbed actions: Dorothy while she balances herself on a rail above the pig sty; Ofelia even after an effort of stripping her dress off prior to her descent into the rotting tree. Both girls find themselves in a mess of trouble as a consequence of their indiscretions.

Del Toro concedes in his interview with Capone that the Faun serves as both The Pale Man and The Toad in Ophelia's challenges. The Faun serves as a "coach" to Ofelia. Del Toro comments that he purposely sets up Ofelia's tests as tests of will, a way for her to gain confidence in using her own instincts and the ability to trust her own actions so that when the faun asks her to give up her brother, she is in a position where she understands the full ramifications of her actions and possesses the tenacity and resolve to choose correctly (Capone 13). In the Toad Challenge, she must retrieve a key from the Toad who has made its home within the roots of the tree, essentially killing

it. Ofelia is able to trick the Toad by concealing an emetic among roly-poly bugs. The Toad vomits up the key and Ofelia emerges from the rotting womb-like structure, much like her mother's own womb which will survive only long enough to allow her brother to escape it. The second challenge involves her drawing a door with magic chalk, using the key to find a magic knife and avoiding eating from a banquet. This banquet is set in front of a monster with sagging skin and eyes in his hand, much like a stigmata. When Ofelia eats grapes from the table, he wakes up in hot pursuit, consuming two fairies in a likeness of Saturn consuming his sons in Goya's painting. Ofelia returns to her room in the nick of time, sans two of the fairies. She has learned that her decisions have far reaching consequences. Her "accident," as she describes it to the Faun, has cost the fairies their lives; she won't make a mistake like that again without considering the full effects of her actions. This serves her well in the last challenge: the choice to give up her brother to the Faun, to shed innocent blood or to resist.

In comparing *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to *Pan's Labyrinth*, Captain Vidal functions as the wizard, the traveling con man, who purports he knows everything and through whom the confirmation of everyone's skills must happen. Captain Vidal is slick and like the wizard finds ways to have the minions do his bidding, enforcing what is

right in his opinion. The Emerald City is a façade[11], a fake, a sham, just like this "clean world" Vidal is attempting to create for his son. The least formidable of the Captain's enemies is the one that is able to foil him, just as Toto knocks down the screen (in the book, a curtain in the movie) projecting the wizard's false, manufactured image. This description resembles the type of contrast between the manufactured Oz and the very real Kansas.

John Hick's populist theory[12] analyzes a scene from *The Wizard of Oz* where the witch has cursed the Tin Woodsman. The witch enchants his axe, and it cuts off his leg, his arms, and finally his head.[13] After each severing of a limb the tinsmith fashions a new part for him. The Tin Woodsman comments: "I thought I had beaten the wicked Witch then, and I worked harder than ever; but I little knew how cruel my enemy could be" (Baum 59). In *Pan's Labyrinth*, Carmen attempts to "cut" off Ophelia from her fairytales, just as Vidal attempts

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[11] People in The Emerald Oz all don green colored glasses, almost like rose-colored glasses. Everything is not as it seems, especially since the ruler is nothing but a hack, a con artist who has convinced everyone that he is the all powerful Oz.

[12] John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*: "Once an independent and hard working human being, the Woodsman found that each time he swung his axe it chopped off a different part of his body, but knowing no other trade, he worked harder than ever. In this way Eastern witchcraft dehumanized the simple laborer so that the faster and better he worked, the more quickly he became a kind of machine" (324).

[13] This is an example of castration anxiety further explained by Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex.

to “cut” off the rebels any way that he can. The sterile, unfeeling mechanization of the Woodsman represents Vidal’s resistance to the natural world. Vidal is unable to accept the disobedience, questioning and rebellion that are a part of natural instinct. Vidal’s inability to embrace nature is reflects in Del Toro’s use of images: “If one looks at the movie as if you were viewing a painting, you would notice the real world is painted cold blue and cold green and comprised of straight lines and diagonals, like the Captain, very straight, all converging; and the fantasy world is a womb, a uterus—golden, round, no straight lines” (D’Arcy 4). Departing from the feminine, the masculine fascist has become the machine, each of his atrocities serving to further sever him from his own humanity.

Each character in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has something they are seeking. The Scarecrow seeks wisdom, the Tin Woodsman the ability to love, and the Lion strength and courage. Ofelia seeks all three of these attributes herself. Saying no to the faun at the end will require Ofelia to have the love for her brother, the wisdom to know that giving him away would be the wrong thing to do, and the courage to stand up for her convictions and accept the consequences. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* it becomes apparent that all of these characters possess what they believe they lack, including Dorothy,

who is simply searching for a way back home, back to Kansas. Likewise, Ofelia has always possessed the potential instinctual power of disobedience and is easily able to refuse the Faun's request to hand over her brother, which allows her to return to her kingdom as a reward when faced with this ultimatum.

For both Dorothy and Ofelia, their realities—either living on a farm during the Depression or witnessing first hand the brutalities of Captain Vidal as a fascist stepfather—their journeys, and their challenges are of their own making. Even if they do not consciously concede this fact, they have the power within Oz and within the labyrinth. They have had the power to return home all along. The ultimate spiritual reality lies within each person in "his or her own backyard," so that the kingdom of Oz or your own true kingdom can be found within yourself (Godwin 3). Ofelia may appear to escape the brutal reality of the Captain by drawing imaginary doorways out of her nightmarish existence, but her true salvation lies in her active resistance, learned through the course of tests or trials that she embarks on at the behest of the Faun.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy chooses to return home to Kansas, despite the wonders of the Emerald City and her newfound friends. It is a little surprising and unsettling that anyone would want to return to

Kansas, during the depression no less, but this is where her heart is and for her “there is no place like home.” For those who have only seen the movie, this is where it ends. Dorothy is back home, tended in her bed by Auntie Em, all of Oz merely a result of a concussion sustained during the tornado. Her friends from the farm, who eerily resemble the Scarecrow, Tin Woodsman, and Lion from her trauma-induced dream, surround her. It was all a dream, and now she is safe at home, ready to accept her place on the farm and her responsibility of being a woman, at least for those who haven’t read any other books in the series.

Baum went on to publish fourteen more Oz books, and when we look at their progression, we find a utopian land, a matriarchy ruled by a goddess-like princess named Ozma. By the time Ozma takes the throne, Dorothy, Aunty Em, and Uncle Henry have immigrated to Oz. Here is a description of Oz from *The Emerald City of Oz*:

> No disease of any sort was ever known among the Ozites, and so no one ever died unless he met with an accident that prevented him from living. This happened very seldom, indeed. There were no poor people in the Land of Oz, because there was no such thing as money, all property of every sort belonged to the Ruler. Each person was given freely by his neighbors, whatever he

> required for his use. They were peaceful, kind-hearted, loving and merry, and every inhabitant adored the beautiful girl who ruled them, and delighted to obey her every command. (Baum TECOO 54)

At the end of *Pan's Labyrinth,* Ofelia returns to her kingdom outfitted with beautiful and sparkling red ruby slippers. She is surrounded by a throng of happy followers, and greeted by her mother and father, both alive and seated on royal thrones. Her father beckons her to come sit by his side. The faun and fairies appear from underneath her mother's throne, excited to welcome the princess back to her rightful place, her true home.

> FAUN: And it is said that the Princess returned to her father's kingdom, that she reigned there with justice and a kind heart for many centuries. That she was loved by her people. And that she left behind small traces of her time on earth, visible only to those who know where to look. (*Pan's Labyrinth*)

It is apparent that both Ozma and Princess Moanna (Ofelia) are loved by their people. It is significant that Ofelia is the only character in the film, outside of her baby brother, who does not do harm to another

human being. She is the change she wants to see in the world around her.

Peter Glassman comments in the Afterword of the 100th Anniversary Edition of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* that although Baum emphasized the virtues of wisdom and love, he does not show a favoring of one over the other, but allows his characters to debate the matter instead. Baum does, however, state his view of what true courage is when the Wizard tells the Cowardly Lion that "there is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. True courage is in facing danger when you are afraid" (Baum *TWWOO* 266). The simplicity of Baum's characters and his honest, candid narratives engage the reader's imagination, leaving a space where subversive ideas can ruminate. "A trip to Oz is not escape because one is forced to become aware of what is absent in America and in the world at large" (Zipes FT 122). Similarly, a trip into *Pan's Labyrinth* is not escape because the film forces us to confront what is lacking in our own world.

Pan's Labyrinth is a fairytale written for adults to tap into the fire of the disobedient, non-compliant spirit of childhood where questions abound. Del Toro's movie is an epiphany of sacrifice and rebirth. In Del Toro's own words: "It's a movie about a girl who gives birth to herself,

into the world she believes in. At that moment, it doesn't matter if her body lives or dies" (Kermode 6). Ofelia claims her agency through her voice, her path and her choice to act, to better the world for herself and her fellow word citizens. Del Toro is the teller of today, inviting us into the labyrinth, daring us to begin the journey to our own center, to question the world around us and not accept our realities complacently.

Conclusion

> *Nothing guarantees freedom. It may never be achieved, or having been achieved may be lost. Alternatives go un-noticed; foreseeable consequences are not foreseen; we may not know what we have been, what we are, or what we are becoming. We are the bearers of consciousness but of not very much, and may proceed through a whole life without awareness of that which would have meant the most, the freedom, which has to be noticed to be real. Freedom is the awareness of alternatives and of the ability to choose. It is contingent upon consciousness, and so may be gained or lost, extended or diminished.*
>
> - from Ann Wheelis in *How People Change* pp. 14-15

In crafting and sharing Ofelia's story in *Pan's Labyrinth,* Del Toro has further emphasized that the personal is indeed political. Jack Zipes in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* speaks about the power of myth, fairytale, and children's literature in relation to German culture. Zipes comments that the German tale "is

the compensatory aesthetic means of communication through which Germans share, discuss and debate social norms and individual aspirations. The fairy tale serves as a key reference point in German culture for self-comprehension and Weltanschauung, or world outlook" (Zipes TBG 86). Del Toro is effectively able to harness this power, recognizable in tales from the Grimms, as well as Ovid and Baum, to create a modern and relevant tale swirling alongside the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War that encourages not only a dialogue regarding the ramifications of that conflict within Spain itself, but a world conversation.

In his book *Breaking the Magic Spell*, Jack Zipes asserts, "the magic in tales (if magic is what it is) lies in people and creatures being shown for what they really are" (Zipes BTMS 27). An essential quality of great fantasy work can be linked to its capacity to subvert accepted standards and provoke readers to rethink their current states of being and the institutions that may hold influence over them (Zipes BTMS 230). Zipes uses the example of Salman Rushdie penning his *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, where a young boy is on a quest to save his father's storytelling skills, as an example of a modern tale that "urges readers to question authoritarianism and to become inventive, daring

and cunning" (Zipes SOE xxix). Del Toro has created this same type of inspiring work with *Pan's Labyrinth*.

Perhaps the movie itself, exposing the fantastic in this little girl's journey, can be relevant as a conduit of hope in the world today. Taking that a step further, Del Toro is the gifted storyteller who can provide omnipotence for his viewers: global citizens of the world and possibly now motivated to reclaim their own agency. Mark Kermode suggests in his article "Girl Interrupted" for *Sight and Sound* that this film's climax lies in "an epiphany of sacrifice and rebirth and further asserts that Del Toro's own career is at a point of rebirth or regeneration" (Kermode 5). During Kermode's interview Del Toro comments:

> I really think that the most creative, most fragile part of the child that lives within me is a child that was literally transformed by monsters. Be they on the screen, or in myth, or in my own imagination. I had lived my life believing two things: that pain should not be sought, but by the same token it should never be avoided, because there is a lesson in facing adversity. Having gone through that experience, I can attest, in a non-masochistic way, that pain is a great teacher. I don't relish it, but I learn from it. I always say, even as an ex-Catholic, that God sends the

letter, but not the dictionary. You need to forge your own dictionary. Kermode 2)

In Graham Allen's book *Intertextuality*, he advises, "our task is to engage with [intertextuality] as a split, multiple concept, which poses questions and requires one to engage with them rather than forcing one to produce definite answers" (Allen 59-60). Some of the answers that arise from viewing the film, as I have proposed here, address ideas of legacy, of finding one's own authentic voice and ensuring that institutions do not attempt to determine an individual's legacy or usurp the power of that voice. I have also shown the "good side" of disobedience, being able to hear your own voice and follow that path as opposed to "blind obedience" that only binds you to someone else's will and negates your own potential. Finally, I have shown that discovering one's own voice and path are actions that are not only personally, but also politically beneficial. Jose Moreno in *Passing the Torch: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade and Its Legacy of Hope,* quotes a Spanish girl, Soraya del Pino, a true modern day Ofelia:

> I am only 15 years old, but I already have ideals. I also love the revolution, which, in May of 1998, seems to have been forgotten. I don't ever want to stop despising the powerful, not

> to give up the singular desire to never become rich. Tell me that this is possible, that society can still be changed through granting power to the imagination. Tell me that I will not end up a bourgeois, in spite of the inevitable passage of time. If there is just one person who can assure me of this, if there's anyone left who has always been faithful to herself, then I will have the strength to hold my fist in the air and keep shouting. (Moreno 19)

It's up to us, the Ofelias of the world, to forge the dictionary, to have a voice in the struggle for freedom, to claim the possibility of choice, to demand our agency, to uncover the unfinished business and transform our world. By combining myth, fairy tale and children's literature, Del Toro has fashioned a journey that has powerful transformative potential, if only we would see it and claim it.

> In darkness there can be light,
>
> In misery there can be beauty,
>
> In death there can be life.
>
> *-Pan's Labyrinth*

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